



**Family &
Community Services**
Community Services

Child, Youth and Family Support: Program Guidelines

Vulnerable Children & Families Branch

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Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist service providers to understand the broad parameters of the Child, Youth and Family Support (CYFS) program within the framework of FACS contracting system. The CYFS Program Guidelines are supported by a companion document – Child Youth and Family Support Service Model – that provide detailed guidance about FACS policy and operational procedures associated with this program.

1. Legislative framework

The primary legislation that underpins FACS' provision of funding to non-government organisations through the CYFS program is the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the *Community Welfare Act 1987* and the regulations associated with these acts. Other legislation that impacts on FACS management of its funded programs includes the *Public Finance & Audit Act 1983*, and the *Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

2. Policy directions and commitments

The CYFS program contributes to a number of NSW Government policy directions and commitments as outlined in various plans.

NSW 2021 is the NSW Government's plan that guides policy and budget decisions. CYFS services are delivered as a means of achieving:-

- Goal 13 of the state plan - NSW 2021 – commits the State government to actions that “better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage”; and
- Goal 1 of the Community Services divisional plan for the period 2012 - 2015 is that “fewer children and young people are vulnerable to abuse and neglect”.

FACS Program Reform

Over the next two years, Community, Early Intervention and Intensive Programs will be undergoing reform with a focus on local need and outcome measurement. There will be many opportunities for your organisation to be a part of that reform process. Program reform will focus on how services delivered to children, young people and families can have a greater impact

and reduce the incidence and prevalence of behaviours that put children and young people at risk.

Over the next two years, these program guidelines will be revised and will require you to address impacts and connections with NSW Government reforms including:

- NSW Child Protection reforms “Safe Home For Life”
- NSW Homelessness reforms including “Going Home Staying Home”
- FACS localisation, including the requirement to participate in district plans
- NSW Family and Domestic Violence reforms “It Stops Here”
- Development in other programs

These reforms may lead to changes occurring during the contractual period. In this case, the existing agreement may be renegotiated with services to reflect new policy and program requirements.

Cultural issues in the provision of FACS funded services

As a FACS funded organisation, you are responsible for ensuring that the services you provide are ‘culturally capable’. This means that your organisation takes account of cultural, linguistic and religious issues in the design and delivery of services so that services are appropriate to the characteristics and circumstances of children, young people and their families. Some practical aspects of culturally capability include:

- The employees of the service reflect the cultural diversity of the Service’s target population
- Your service has clear policies and strategies in place for working with families from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Employees are able to provide information to clients and to use resources that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.
- Training is provided for service staff in culturally reflective casework practices that are appropriate for refugee and migrant communities.
- Your staff have access to interpreter services where this is necessary to support a client.

Funded organisations will source interpreter services independent of FACS. They will also be required to report on their use of interpreter services through the annual FACS acquittal/accountability process.

3. Program description

The CYFS program funds a broad range of early intervention services to meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families whose needs fall below the threshold for statutory intervention.

The program delivers services in two 'streams':

- Child and Family Support services for families with children up to 12 years of age; and
- Youth and Family Support services for young people aged 12 to 17 years, or for families with young people in this age range.

Program goals:

The broad goal of the CYFS program is to provide relevant supports to children, young people and families who have an identified vulnerability which, if not addressed, may escalate to the point where more intensive intervention, including statutory child protection, may become necessary.

Families referred for CYFS services may be experiencing one or more of the following vulnerabilities, including:

- Lack of social or extended family supports
- Parental learning difficulties such that parents need support to develop parenting capacity and the skills they need to deal appropriately with child development stages. These families may come in and out of services at key points in the family life cycle
- Parental difficulty in managing children's behaviour or emotional issues
- Financial difficulties and/or poverty such as young people or families seeking support with household budgeting or applying for jobs
- Illness, including mental health issues such as mild depression, or sudden illness requiring social support
- Cultural barriers such as new migrant families unable to access culturally appropriate supports and services
- Homelessness (families needing referral for immediate housing and/or with longer term housing needs)
- Women leaving violent relationships (and their children), who need assistance to access legal services, housing and other supports.

Service delivery principles:

The CYFS service model is underpinned by a number of principles:

Voluntary participation: Families and young people voluntarily participate in the Child, Youth and Family Support program; and informed consent is a key requirement of service delivery/participation.

Effective engagement: Families will be engaged actively in order to build the relationships that facilitate participation and change. Engagement is an ongoing process during CYFS interventions from first contact, through assessment, case planning, service delivery and exit planning. Parents are engaged in services provided for young people under the program.

Person-centred: Services are child and young person-focused with the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people paramount.

Evidence-based: Assessments and interventions to be evidenced based, monitored and evaluated and demonstrate positive outcomes and value for money.

Strengths-based: Positive outcomes for children, young people and families are achieved through development of a relationship that recognises their strengths and their needs, and builds the capacity of parents/carers and family members.

Culturally competent: Services and programs should ensure that all Aboriginal children and young people are safe and connected to family, community and culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should participate in decision making concerning the care and protection of their children and young people and with as much self-determination as is possible, and steps should be taken to empower local communities to that end.

Collaboration and partnership: Service providers will collaborate with each other and work in partnership to deliver timely, effective and integrated services for vulnerable families, children and young people.

4. **Program scope and boundary**

CYFS is one of a number of FACS programs that respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families. Specifically, CYFS delivers services to families whose needs do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention – ‘risk of serious harm’ (ROSH). Services target low to medium risk children, young people and families where presenting problems, if not addressed, may escalate to the point where either:

- The family is reported and risk of significant harm to a child or young person is identified or,
- A more intensive service, such as that provided by Brighter Futures, would be required.

Services provided under CYFS are not suitable for:

- Families that are currently the subject of active case management support through FACS or another service provider (this does not exclude families receiving case management from a service under the Child and Family Support stream from also accessing other services provided under the Child and Family Support stream).
- Families that have the capacity to engage with universal services, and are successful in obtaining the help they need through those services.

In addition, Child and Family Support services are not suitable for families that do not have children aged under 13 years or are not expecting a child.

5. Program results and outcomes

The Program has the following high-level aims:

- To prevent families from entering or re-entering child protection
- To provide parents and carers with improved parenting knowledge and skills
- To ensure that young people remain engaged with education or are in employment
- To assist families and young people to achieve their goals.

Results:

- Children and young people have healthy development
- Children and young people are safe living with their family
- Parents are confident, connected to their community and its services and are equipped to support their children's development and wellbeing
- Families have positive well-being

Outcomes:

Child and Family Support stream:

Children:

- Are linked to specialist services to improve developmental gap areas

Parents/Carers:

- Have improved parenting knowledge and skills
- Know about FACS and resources to meet their family's needs
- Have people to support them

Families:

- Achieve their goals

- Have increased strengths

Youth and Family Support stream:

Young people:

- Remain engaged with education or are in employment
- Are connected with their family
- Participate positively in community life
- Have knowledge and skills for positive life choices
- Achieve their goals

Young people in families:

- Achieve their goals
- Have increased resiliency factors

Parents/carers:

- Know about FACS and resources to meet their families needs
- Have improved relationships with their children

6. Service group objectives

In FACS funded programs system, CYFS forms part of a group of programs known as the *Targeted Earlier Intervention for Vulnerable Children, Young People & Families* service group. The programs in this service group are all geared to meeting the needs of children, young people and families who have identified vulnerabilities. The shared, broad objective of these programs is to prevent the further escalation of issues that contribute to this vulnerability.

The table below illustrates where this program is located within the FACS funded programs continuum of services.

FACS Continuum of Service

Universal		Targeted						Statutory Intervention								
Prevention and Early Intervention								Child Protection		OOHC						
Community Builders	Families NSW	Aboriginal Child Youth & Family Strategy	Aboriginal Child & Family Centres	Integrated Domestic & Family Violence Services Program	Staying Home Leaving Violence	Child, Youth & Family Support	Getting it Together	Brighter Futures	Youth Hope	Strengthening Families	Statutory Child Protection Casework	Intensive Family Support/ Intensive Family Preservation	Intensive Family Based Services	∞	OOHC Casework	OOHC Reform

7. Evidence base

The CYFS program was established in Financial Year 2010-11 by re-aligning services previously funded through the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP) to better reflect contemporary government priorities identified in *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing* and the *NSW State Plan*.

Service models for the two CYFS service streams are based on national and international research into best practice early intervention services. Broadly, the term 'early intervention' is used to mean activities, programs and initiatives designed to alter the behaviour or development of individuals who show signs of an identified problem, or who exhibit risk factors or vulnerabilities for an identified problem, by providing the resources and skills necessary to combat the identified risks¹. Early intervention includes intervening early in life, early in the developmental pathway, and/or early in the life of the problem.

For the purpose of this service model, early intervention refers to services and programs to support children, young people and their families (as defined in target specifications) designed to prevent entry or escalation into statutory child protection services or out-of-home care.

Research has clearly established that crucial brain development occurs during the first three years of life. McCain and Mustard² emphasise that the regulatory control of the brain and its pathways are shaped by events during the prenatal period and in the early years of life. The quality of care received during this period strongly influences not only early development but development that extends into adulthood³.

While brain development in the first three years forms the foundation for later cognitive and emotional development, growth of the pre-frontal cortex during the adolescent years is linked with executive processes affecting many diverse areas of cognitive function, including memory, information processing, behavioural organisation, attention, judgement, and the ability to cope with novel experiences.

The adolescent period is also marked by increased involvement in risk behaviours that while usually transitory in nature may also predispose some

¹ Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet 2006, Policy Alert Issue 18: Early Childhood and Early Intervention

² MN McCain and JF Mustard, *The early years study three years later: From early child development to human development*. Toronto: The Founders Network, 2002

³ J Shonkoff and D Phillips (Eds.), *From neurons to neighbourhoods: the science of early child development*, Washington: National Academy Press, 2000.

young people to poor long-term outcomes. There is increasing evidence of the significant level of emotional and behavioural difficulties such as depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, substance misuse and suicidal thoughts that are experienced by some Australian adolescents⁴.

In 2013, FACS analysed client self-report data gathered from CYFS service providers for the period February to December 2012. This analysis indicates that a majority of the clients who participated in this self-report exercise reported that the program assisted them to learn new things, improve their confidence and supported their regular attendance at school⁵.

8. Target group

In general, CYFS targets children/young people and their families who are experiencing low to medium risk issues that can be addressed by providing appropriately targeted, short term supports to prevent escalation of these issues.

There are specific eligibility criteria for families accessing the two CYFS service streams:

To be eligible for services under the **Child and Family Support** stream, a family will:

- have children aged 0-12 years (includes expecting a child)
- experience vulnerabilities that impact on their capacity to adequately protect and care for their children if not addressed
- currently be experiencing low to medium risk issues that if not addressed, may escalate to the point where more intensive services are needed or risk of significant harm is identified, and
- be unable meet the needs of the child(ren) through universal services.

To be eligible under the **Youth and Family Support** stream, a young person/family will:

- be aged between 12 and 17 years, or be a family with a young person aged between 12 and 17 years

⁴ M Sawyer, et al. 'The mental health of young people in Australia: Key findings from the child and adolescent component of the national survey of mental health and well-being', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 2001, 35 (6), 806-814.

⁵ FACS (2013) *Child Youth and Family Support: Final Evaluation Report*

- experience vulnerabilities that, if not addressed, adversely impact on their health, safety or wellbeing, or, if parents, their capacity to adequately protect and care for the young person
- currently experience low to medium risk issues that, if not addressed, may escalate to the point where more intensive services are needed or risk of significant harm is identified, and
- be unable meet the needs of the young person and family through universal services
- be at risk of homelessness.

Children, young people and families will receive priority access to CYFS services if they:

- are referred by a Family Referral Service
- are referred by a Specialist Homelessness Service
- are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- have been on the eligibility list the longest.

9. Service types/activities funded

CYFS funds delivery of a range of service activity components that NGO service providers may choose to provide under their agreement with FACS.

Not all children, young people or families will require all of the services described here. NGO service providers will determine the 'mix' of services that is required to meet the needs of particular children, young people and families. Some of these services may be accessed by referral outside the CYFS service system.

Child and Family Support:

Service Activity Components	Service Description
Advice and referral (referral, information, advice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing comprehensive information and advice to families experiencing non-chronic and non entrenched problems (such as child's behaviour, financial difficulties, unemployment and lack of day-to-day living skills); ▪ Providing information and support so that families access appropriate services; ▪ Providing an entry and referral point for other services provided as part of the Child, Youth and Family Support service model (e.g. case management and parenting skills activities).
Assessment and case planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing assessment and case planning to: assess the strengths and needs of the child and family, including any risks; plan and co-ordinate a mix of services to meet the child/ren and family's needs and address risks; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the services being delivered to the child/ren and family.

Client focussed case work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertaking activities to implement the case plans of individual clients, including: information and advice; support, advocacy and counselling; mediation; referrals to relevant agencies or specialist services; skills development to help clients achieve outcomes; and the use of brokerage to purchase goods and/or services. ▪ Providing education programs (e.g. life skills, budgeting, protective behaviours training to individuals and groups).
Home visiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing a structured program that provides parenting skills development and support to parents and is delivered to an individual family in the home or another location (e.g. Parents As Teachers program).
Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing counselling by qualified professionals to child/ren, carers and families who have been assessed as needing counselling.
Practical/skills development groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing practical skills in a group situation (e.g. cooking, household management, money management skills).
Parenting skills groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing structured parenting programs comprising short-term focussed interventions designed to help parents improve their relationship with their child. These groups will focus on developing parents' skills in responding to children's needs and appropriately addressing challenging behaviours and emotional problems.
Parent support groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitating self help/peer support groups for parents experiencing particular issues, for example, post natal depression.

Youth and Family Support:

Service Activity Components	Service Description
Advice and referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing information and advice to young people and/or their families experiencing non-chronic and non entrenched problems including alcohol and/or other drug misuse; health, including mental health issues; transition; safety; relationships; education; training, employment; culture and justice issues; ▪ Providing information and support so that young people and/or their families access appropriate services; ▪ Providing an entry and referral point for other services provided as part of the Child, Youth and Family Support service model (e.g. case management and counselling).
Assessment and case planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing assessment and case planning to: assess the strengths and needs of the young person and/or their family, including the risks and needs of the young person and/or their family; plan and co-ordinate a mix of services to meet needs of the young person and/or their families and address any risk factors; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the services being delivered to the young person and/or their families.
Client focussed case work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertaking activities to implement the case plans of the individual young person and/or their family, including: information and advice; support, advocacy and counselling; mediation; referrals to relevant agencies or specialist services; skills development to help clients achieve personal goals; and the use of brokerage to purchase goods and/or services.
Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing counselling by qualified professionals to young people and/or families who have been assessed as needing counselling.
Skill focussed groups and/or training for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instructional/skills development groups to develop life skills training (social skills, relationships) financial management/budgeting; career advice and support; ▪ Training/workshops provided to teach clients how to achieve personal goals. Training/workshops may include: life skills training; financial management/budgeting; ▪ Multi-component programs including psychosocial support, self-help strategies, skill development, relationship development, building connection to family and education, and specialised and multidisciplinary care or treatment.
Parenting skills groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing structured parenting programs comprising short-term focussed interventions designed to help parents improve their relationship and communication with their young person, or to help young parents to improve their relationship with their child/ren, and to develop appropriate skills in responding to their child's needs and in addressing challenging behaviours and emotional problems.

10. Performance measures and service results

CYFS service providers enter into a contract with FACS to achieve results for participating families. These results will be monitored using the following, agreed, performance measures.

Child and Family Support:

Service Results	Performance Measures
<p>Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are linked to specialist services to improve developmental gap areas <p>Parents/carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have improved parenting knowledge and skills • Know about FACS and resources to meet their family's needs • Have people to support them <p>Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve their goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percentage of parents/carers who say they feel more confident in parenting • Number and percentage of parents/carers who say that through the program they have learned new things to assist them in parenting, and about services and resources for families in the area • Number and percentage of families that stay in the Program for the planned duration

Youth and Family Support:

Service Results	Performance Measures
<p>Parents/carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know about FACS and resources to meet their family's needs • Have improved relationship/s with their child/ren <p>Young people in families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve their goals • Have increased resiliency factors <p>Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain engaged with education or are in employment • Are connected with their family • Participate positively in community life • Have knowledge and skills for positive life choices • Achieve their goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and percentage of parents/carers who say they feel more confident in parenting • Number and percentage of accepted young people/families who stayed in the Program for the planned duration • Number and percentage of young people who say that through the Program they learned new things and feel more confident • Number and percentage of young people with poor school attendance at entry to the Program who, at exit, attend school regularly or attend vocational training or at least 20 hours per week paid employment • Number and percentage of young people who say the most important goal was fully achieved

11. Data collection strategies

NGOs funded through CYFS are required to report to FACS on the work they do with clients. This routine annual reporting covers:

- Routine reporting, at 6 month intervals, of aggregate data on the work that service providers undertake with service users who receive case management and parenting programs. Information is collected on families entering or leaving the Program.
- Annual reporting of data gathered during a 2 week period to give a 'snapshot' view of young people or families who receive short-term advice and referral services (ie. who are not CYFS case-managed clients).

A suite of tools (both electronic and paper-based) is made available to assist service providers to comply with this reporting requirement. Reporting generally covers the period of the standard Australian financial year.

Information reported to FACS will be used for four purposes:

- To assess each service's effectiveness in delivering the outcomes specified in the contract
- To measure the service's contribution to CYFS program objectives, FACS goals and the goals of the NSW state plan: NSW 2021
- As part of Program evaluation
- To provide feedback to service providers on their performance.

A 'user guide' for the standard CYFS data collection tools, and electronic copies of the tools, is available through the website:

www.community.nsw.gov.au

12. Partnership framework

Family Referral Services

The Family Referral Services (FRS) program is managed by NSW Health via a network of NGO-delivered services set up to streamline access to early intervention service provision. Eleven FRS provide advice, referral and needs assessment to vulnerable children, young people and families across NSW. Families referred by FRS receive priority of access.

Specialist Homelessness Services

The Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) program is a Commonwealth/state funded program which provides funding for a range of support and accommodation services to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women and children affected by domestic

violence. These services include case management, support, outreach, advocacy, practical assistance and supported accommodation services, as well as linkages to other services such as health and housing. Clients referred by SHS receive priority of access.

Other partnerships

FACS enters into agreements with other government agencies to facilitate collaboration within the service system. An example of this is the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between Family and Community Services and the Department of Attorney General and Justice regarding the regulation of minimum standards for men's domestic violence behaviour change programs.

Under this agreement, when providing referrals to domestic violence behaviour change programs FACS funded Service Providers will only refer domestic violence perpetrators to behaviour change programs that meet the [minimum standards](http://www.domesticviolence.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/minimum_standards_mdvbcp.html). A list of approved providers can be found at http://www.domesticviolence.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/minimum_standards_mdvbcp.html